

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4704

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY SANAA

CINCINCEUR

S E C R E T ADDIS ABABA 6554

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT PFOR ET SO FR YE YS SA

SUBJECT: ALI MIRAH FLEES TO DJIBOUTI: FIGHTING ERUPTS

REFS: (A) ADDIS 6459; (B) USDAO 0413JUNE75

1. FRENCH CHARGE INFORMED US IN UTMOST CONFIDENCE THAT AFAR SULTAN ALI MIRAH HANFERE, WITH AN ENTOURAGE OF 20, PRESUMABLY RELATIVES AND KEY MEN, FLED INTO TFAI JUNE 2. FRENCH TOOK HIM TO DJIBOUTI, WHERE HE IS NOW. ACCORDING CHARGE, FRENCH "EXPECT TO KEEP HIM ONLY FOR THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE TIME."

2. FRENCH HAVE HARD REPORT THAT AFAR HAVE BLOWN BRIDGE ON ASSAB ROAD "IN MOUNTAINOUS AREA." THEY THINK IT WILL TAKE SEVERAL DAYS AT MINIMUM TO REPAIR. FRENCH HAVE SOMEWHAT SOFTER REPORT, TO WHICH THEY INCLINED GIVE CREDENCE, THAT ANOTHER BRIDGE ON ASSAB ROAD- FURTHER INLAND- HAS ALSO BEEN BLOWN. FRENCH CHARGE SAID THAT AFAR LABOR AT FRENCH ROAD CONSTRUCTION CAMP HAS DISAPPEARED AND THEY ARE INCLINED TO READ THIS AS EVIDENCE OF AFAR "MOBILIZATION."

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3. REPORTS NOW COMING IN (CF REF B) THAT FIGHTING HAS BROKEN OUT IN TENDAHOE AREA OF LOWER AWASH BETWEEN AFAR, NON-AFAR CIVILIANS AND ETHIOPIAN REGULARS. PRELIMINARY REPORTS SPEAK OF UP TO 80 DEAD BUT THESE ARE UNCONFIRMED AND OF UNCERTAIN ORIGIN. WE ARE INCLINED TO READ THEM MERELY AS INDICATIVE OF FACT THAT FIGHTING MAY BE OF SOME SCOPE AND CONSEQUENCE.

4. COMMENT: FACT THAT ALI MIRAH IN FRENCH HANDS LIKELY IMPACT HEAVILY ON FRANCO-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS, AT MINIMUM UNTIL SULTAN MOVES ON TO OTHER DESTINATIONS. ACCORDINGLY, ADDRESSEES ARE REQUESTED NOT RPT NOT REVEAL KNOWLEDGE OF THIS DEVELOPMENT BEFORE FRENCH OR ETHIOPIANS DO SO. FRENCH CHARGE STATES THAT THIS INFORMATION NOT RPT NOT BEING GIVEN ANYONE ELSE. TO BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, ALI MIRAH SITUATION NOT RPT NOT YET KNOWN IN ADDIS DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY, ALTHOUGH WORD OF FIGHTING IN LOWER AWASH IS SPREADING RAPIDLY.

5. WE KNOW LITTLE OF AFAR PLANS OR CAPABILITIES IN CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES. WE ASSUME EPMG WILL MAKE MAXIMUM EFFORT PROTECT TRAFFIC ON DJIBOUTI RAILWAY AND ASSAB ROAD FROM AFAR HARASSMENT. WHETHER AUTHORITIES CAN DO SO EFFECTIVELY REMAINS TO BE SEEN.
HUMMEL

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